

**CAPITAL REPORT****Quemoy: Tough Hurdle for Reds**

By FULTON LEWIS, JR.

WASHINGTON, Aug. 22—There is a certain puzzling unreality about the persistent reports that Mao Tse-tung and his Red Chinese armies are preparing to seize little Quemoy Island as a first step in invading Nationalist-held Formosa.

My skepticism is not based on any firm intelligence information, but rather on symptomatic facts that certainly are known to the Communist leaders on the mainland.

In the first place, Quemoy is not necessary to a Communist invasion of Formosa. It would be a convenience, because it now is blocking the important South China port of Amoy, which is the nearest deep-water harbor to Formosa on the China mainland.

But the cost of capturing it— if, indeed it could be captured at all—would be completely prohibitive, as the Reds found out in 1949 when they had every advantage on their side. An attempt now, probably would bring the United States Seventh Fleet down on their necks with disastrous results.

Quemoy—or Kinmen ("Golden Gate") as the Chinese call it—is one of the most forbidding arsenals in the world. It is a barren, flat piece of land, shaped like a dumb-bell, a little more than 15 miles long, and about half as wide at the widest point. At the northern extreme is a rocky elevation, honey-combed with artillery installations, commanding the nearest point of Communist-held territory about three-fourths of a mile away.

Otherwise, the span of water ranges from 5 to 10 miles and any invading force would be sitting ducks. When the Red Armies drove Chiang Kai-shek off the mainland in 1949, they tried to follow up their advantage by taking Quemoy, too.

It cost them a full division of 18,000 men, with great masses of equipment. The water's edge was so piled with bodies that it was impossible to dispose of them by burial, so they were dumped into ravines and covered over by bulldozers. Eight hundred wells were filled with them, and sealed.

THAT WAS WHEN the Nationalists were at their lowest ebb of fortune. When I inspected the island some months back, there were 75 thousand battle-ready Commandos there, with the most modern equipment that the United States could provide.

There is an airfield of considerable size, large enough for jet fighters, and the 60 thousand civilian natives of the island have been put to work building a scientific network of arteries and access roads that provide immediate concentration of troops at any point on the island.

The whole military apparatus is so effective that for the last nine years not a single ship has entered or departed from Amoy harbor.

Thus, the talk of a Red invasion of Quemoy is little short of incredible and suggests a wily propaganda pattern for unschooled Western news media. I suspect, indeed, that Chiang might welcome attack as an excuse for him to retaliate.

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